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'Classis in the 21st century' conference a big hit

Marian Van Til

COLORADO SPRINGS, Col. — Most Christian Reformed Church members are probably aware of what their denomination's general synod does every June, at least on major issues. And there's a good chance they know what their local church council is up to. But who knows, much less gets excited about, what their classis does? In the words of John Tenyenhuis, pastor of Rehoboth Fellowship CRC (Classis Toronto): "That middle layer of church government doesn't catch the hearts of people at all, for all kinds of reasons."

It is that problem which was addressed at a denomination-wide conference held Oct. 27-29 at Glen Eyrie, a conference centre in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Sponsored jointly by Home Missions and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), the title of the conference explained its goal: "The Role of Classis in the 21st Century: Rethinking Ministry from Church-Shaped Missions to a Mission-Shaped Church."

Two hundred twenty people attended, including up to four delegates each from all but three of the 46 CRC classes. Delegates could be ordained church officers — or not. The only stipulation, was "you have to be involved in some kind of ministry in your classis," says Peter Slofstra, pastor of Jubilee Fellowship CRC in St. Catharines, Ont., and a delegate from Classis Niagara.

C.C. FILES

Nick Overduin (left) and Peter Sloftra represented Classis Niagara at the Colorado conference

Whose business is it?

Every delegate to whom CC spoke was excited about the helpfulness of the conference. It was so helpful because "it allowed us to focus on the unexpressed frustrations that many people throughout the denomination feel about the structure of classis," says Ken Gehrels, pastor of Calvin CRC in Ottawa and a delegate from Classis Eastern Canada.

Gehrels adds, "Classes now focus on deliberating and governing, but there's a third thing we must focus on: doing ministry." And the conference showed delegates ways to do that.

Slofstra describes what he says are the "frustrations about classis" that many delegates expressed. Current classis meetings are "unspiritual, dry, routine, and often full of argument."

Jerry Buwalda, an American pastor delegate from Leota, Minn. (Classis Minnesota South) concurs with Slofstra's assessment. "Classis meetings here are basically the same as they were when I entered the ministry almost 27 years ago — and I started out in this classis," he says. "We open with a short Scripture passage and prayer; we read reports [out loud] which have already been handed out; we do business; we go home."

Buwalda candidly observes: "The men in this classis are lethargic enough to not question whether things should be different. Elder delegates to classis are chosen by strict rotation, not by gifts. In some classes I know, elders will simply refuse to go." He adds, "Some classes are falling apart. It's not to that point out here. But we do have to look at the purpose of classis: ministry. You *do* have business to do, but you can frame that in

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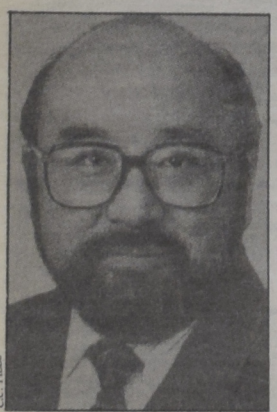
Common sense revolution bypasses religion, says rabbi

Murray MacAdam

As cutbacks in government programs and social assistance take their toll on Ontario's poor, criticism is mounting that the cuts are unfair. Many Christians are joining the protests.



C.C. FILES

David Tsubouchi, Ontario's Ministry of Community and Social Services

An event titled "Common Sense — God Sense," sponsored by the Inter-Faith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC) on Nov. 2, heard a powerful indictment of Ontario's approach by Rabbi Dow Marmur of Toronto.

Marmur based his criticism on government values, which, in his view, clash with those of the Hebrew prophets. The problem, argued Marmur, is that the Conservatives' guiding document, *The Common Sense Revolution*, reflects a society in which "religion is relegated to the private realm."

"The Hebrew prophets were partisan," Rabbi Marmur told the 100 people present. "They took the side of the poor and disadvantaged. As a result, they judged society not by the way it provided for the powerful, but by the way it dealt with the downtrodden. Yet instead of being based on this sense of shared social responsibility, the Ontario government seems to be following a philosophy of 'what's mine is mine, and what's your is yours.'"

"The value system that informs my spiritual life is based on the psalmist's assertion that 'the earth is the Lord's and all that it holds'" (Psalm 24:1), the rabbi continued. Just as God is merciful, so must we be. God is kind and righteous, so must we be. The imperative to imitate God in order to be fully human stands in sharp contrast to the notion of "mine is mine."

"We fear that the laudable common sense efforts to reduce the fiscal deficit will create a moral deficit with much more devastating implications," Marmur said. "The remedy is worse than the disease."

Severe hardships

There were other Harris critics at the meeting. ISARC chairperson David Pfrimmer said, "The religious community has been outraged by the abandonment of the compassion that had marked our culture."

The meeting heard first-hand about the suffering which poor people are experiencing since the slashing of their incomes. One of the first acts of the Harris government was to announce cuts of 21.6 per cent to social assistance benefits; the cuts took effect in October.

"The hardship will be severe," said Sue Cox from the Daily Bread Foodbank, which supplies food to 200 agencies in Metro Toronto. Even before the cutbacks,

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News

Conference intense, helpful

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in a different way."

A series of five plenary addresses, four small group meetings and a choice of three out of eight workshops gave delegates a scant hour-and-a-half of free time in three days. "It was more intense than marriage encounter," quips Chaplain Nick Overduin of Classis Niagara. Delegates were helped to envision how their classes can be less the way Slofstra and Buwalda describe them and "more of a ministry event," says Overduin.

Plenary speaker Craig Van Gelder, professor of missions at Calvin Seminary, reminded delegates that "mission is not just what the church *does*; it's the reason the church exists." That theme was echoed often.

Delegates saw "examples of classes which have already made refreshing changes," says Slofstra. They went home with suggestions they will try to put to use. Overduin and Slofstra say they have 11 suggestions which they and the other two Classis Niagara delegates would like to present to their classis.

One example: Instead of the kind of routine, never-changing meetings that Buwalda describes, and instead of day-time meetings attended only by those who are self-employed or who have jobs with flexible schedules and bosses, Classis Kalamazoo has gone to evening meetings. That also allows attendance by guests and other church members who want to get involved. Meetings begin at 6 p.m. with a meal, a half-hour of worship and a time of sharing. Then business is attended to from 8 to 10 p.m.

Other positive effects

Each delegate also came home with a report called "Rethinking Ministry." The report, prepared by a 14-member, bi-national task force on the role of classis in the 21st century and commissioned by Home Missions and CRWRC, was the theological foundation of the conference.

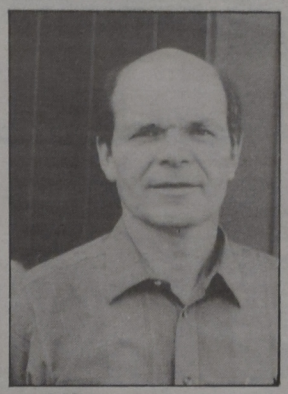
Ken Gehrels says, "I went as a cynic; I came back a convert."

The problems, he says — of not running our regional affairs in a stewardly manner, and of being more responsive to the Lord's task for the church in our post-Christian society — "were addressed in an articulate and practical manner."

Gehrels and the other Eastern Canada delegates intend to "start a dialogue" in their classis about ways they can improve their ministry.

Buwalda says he and the other three delegates from his classis also have taken good ideas from the conference. He hopes for better co-ordination of their growing Vietnamese ministry, which is shared with two neighboring classes. Their full-time diaconal conference co-ordinator, Marie Ekdom, has already helped fire up people about diaconal work, Buwalda says, and he hopes that enthusiasm will grow. "We have to go slowly with changes in classis," he says. But since many are "feeling some uneasiness" about how well their classis works, they may be open to change.

Conference topic was a synodical matter, says pastor



Jack Vos

Marian Van Til

BARRIE, Ont. — Only three of the 46 Christian Reformed classes refused to participate in the "Role of Classis in the 21st Century" conference. Two of the three were Canadian classes: Toronto and Hamilton.

Jack Vos, pastor of the CRC in Barrie, Ont., and a member of Classis Toronto's interim committee, was in a position to make his opposition to the conference count. He explains why he didn't want his classis to participate.

Legitimate approach

Vos didn't object to the content of the conference, he says, but to how it came about and who sponsored it. "I wouldn't say there's no need for classes to be refreshed and strengthened," says Vos, "but there are legitimate ways to put that need on the table." And those legitimate ways, he says, are to bring the issue to synod.

"The Church Order spells out how classes are to function. If classes don't function properly, it's synod's job to figure out why," Vos asserts.

"If that procedure were followed, you'd have synod look at the issue and appoint a study committee which would then recommend changes. They could look at the issue more efficiently and at greater depth. Any recommended changes would then be sent to the churches and they would *have* to deal with them. Now, there's not a single classis that *has* to take this [conference and its recommendations] seriously."

Extremely expensive

Vos also points out that church agencies like Home Missions and CRWRC, which sponsored the conference, "have their respective assignment — the work of evangelism and the work of mercy. It's not valid for agencies to call the whole church together for as limited an issue as the function of classis, Vos says, and it was extremely expensive, as well. "This conference was probably more expensive than synod," Vos concludes.

Ontario government 'abandoning the poor'

...continued from page 1

the foodbank was unable to meet emergency needs.

"Over and over, people tell us: 'I've paid my rent, I've paid my Hydro and I've got $20 left for the whole month,'" Cox said. She predicts that the number of people using foodbanks will soar by 95 per cent in Metro Toronto, adding that people only use foodbanks if they have to. "It's an experience they find humiliating," she said.

Conscientious objection

Citizens for Public Justice public affairs director Gerald Vandezande, an active member of ISARC, can't explain how faith communities and the voluntary sector, as Harris has suggested, can fill the enormous gap created by government cuts to social assistance and programs. CPJ goes so far as to describe the government's approach as a "war against the poor." It is calling for a public movement of "conscientious objection" against this war.

"What we have is an ongoing project of abandoning the poor," says Vandezande. "There is no excuse in this province for long-term poverty, hunger and homelessness. It is cruel to blame the poor for the lack of employment that makes people poor. And it is unconscionable that in the middle of these social problems, the Ontario government is pledging tax rebates to well-to-do people who won't face a bitter winter like our poor neighbors."

Preaching good news

Vandezande was quoted in a front-page story in the *Toronto Star* on November 6 about the response of church people to the cutbacks, as saying: "Religious leaders aren't as courageous and daring as they used to be.

A range of strategies are being pursued by individual Christians and faith groups to raise public awareness and to persuade the government to change its course. These include petitions and vigils. CPJ is circulating a petition to the Ontario legislature. It asks for non-approval of "any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment ... are dealt with effectively, and until the province's deficit [is] paid down."

A petition to Premier Harris from Hamilton United Church members notes that "as followers of Jesus we share his calling 'to bring good news to the poor' and 'to let the oppressed go free' (Luke 4:18). Our Judaeo-Christian heritage speaks a strong warning to those 'who trample the heads of the poor into the dust of the earth and push the afflicted out of the way' (Amos 2:7)."

Discussions about how to deal with government withdrawal from concern for the poor are continuing, says Vandezande. Some are proposing that, if the tax cut goes ahead, a special church-operated fund for the most needy be established, based on donations from Christians who want to express their solidarity with the poor.

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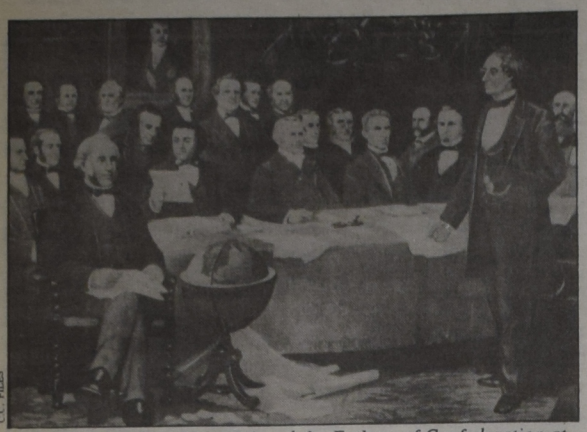
Opinion

Lament for two nations: *post-referendum musings*



C.C. FILES

Sir John A. Macdonald (right) and the Fathers of Confederation at the Quebec Conference, held Oct. 10, 1864.

Anthony J. Looy

The British view of Quebec from the Conquest to Confederation was shaped by the reports from British governors-general and other officials who served for a time in Quebec. That these views were racist by modern standards is hardly surprising, considering the temper of the 18th and 19th centuries.

One governor-general, Lord Durham, nicknamed "Radical Jack," reported to the colonial office in Westminster that the French-Canadians were "a people with no history and no literature." He also characterized the 1837 Rebellion in Lower Canada as "a struggle between *two nations* [emphasis mine] in the bosom of a single state. "In his heart of hearts Durham believed that the only hope for improving the "lowly" French-Canadians was to anglicize and assimilate them.

Injustice at the start

Lord Sydenham, another governor-general, entertained similar notions. In 1840 Sydenham reunited Upper and Lower Canada into the United Province of Canada under a single, elected legislature. This legislative assembly was made up of 84 members, 42 from the French-speaking half (renamed Canada East) and 42 from the English-speaking half (Canada West).

The principle of equal representation was a grave injustice to the French-speaking Canadians in Canada East. After all, the French in the early 1840s outnumbered the English by 650,000 to 450,000. To add insult to injury, Sydenham also decreed that no French could be used in the legislative assembly.

The British view of the French-Canadians is in painful contrast with John A. Macdonald's insightfulness. Our first prime minister after Confederation wrote in 1857: "Treat them [French-Canadians] as *a nation* [emphasis mine] and they will act as a free people generally do — generously."

Ongoing debate

Modern Canada began in 1867 under the name Dominion of Canada, a reference to the eighth verse of Psalm 72. Our new constitution was hammered out in the form of 72 resolutions in some three weeks by 33 Canadian politicians — an amazing feat! These resolutions were (virtually unchanged) incorporated by the British parliament into the British North-America Act, nowadays known as the Constitution Act, 1867.

The essence of the Canadian Constitution (even today) is, of course, the distribution of governmental powers between the federal government on the one hand, and the provinces on the other hand. In the British North-America Act these powers are spelled out, respectively, in Articles 91 and 92.

Over the last one hundred years or so there has been a debate about the nature of our constitution or, in other words, about the very nature of Canada. Simultaneously there has been a provincial onslaught on the powers of the federal government. There is nothing new under the Canadian sun. The "modern" notion of decentralization or devolution is no more than the resurrection of a hundred-year old notion, known at the time as "provincial rights," invented and practised to his heart's content by then Ontario premier Oliver Mowat.

The long-standing problem of the nature of our constitution was painfully expressed in the referenda of 1980 and 1995, as well as in the wranglings surrounding the Meech Lake and Charlottetown discussions. In simple language, the question is whether Canada is a partnership, or a compact of provinces, or a partnership of two nations.

There should be no doubts that French-Canada (Quebec) is a nation in terms of its history, geography, culture, language, and even in some of its institutions. We should also acknowledge that, historically speaking, French-Canadians have suffered a litany of injustices, first at the hand of the British and later at the hands of English-speaking Canadians and their government, be it federal or provincial.

Deep roots

The roots of Quebec's nationalism lie deeply embedded in its history. The Quebec priest, Groulx, who became a very popular Canadian historian in the early part of our century, defined French-Canadian nationalism in religious and mystical terms. The messianic theme, namely that God providentially planted the French-Canadians along the shores of the St. Lawrence for a divine purpose, was not uncommon at the time.

The "French" view of Canadian history is distinctly different from the "English" interpretation. The same ought to be said about the views of First Nations people. To name only one example, the story of Confederation has often been painted in Quebec's classrooms as just another attempt to subdue French-Canadians.

A divided people

It has been pointed out before that French-Canadian nationalism is diverse and even fractured. Indeed, the views that unite Quebec's nationalists are undoubtedly less significant than the differences that divide them.

It is probably also true that the lowest common denominator among French-Canadians is the widely shared conviction that Quebec is not just another province. The vast majority of French-Canadians will not accept at this point the belated recognition that Quebec is a distinct society. For that matter, neither will Preston Manning's Reform Party and some of our provincial premiers. The notion of "distinct society" is *passé*. Or, in Lucien Bouchard's opinion, "Trop tard et trop peu" — too late and too little.

Lack of greatness

The referendum campaign was worrisome and even depressing. First, it is difficult to disagree with the editorial comment in the *Globe and Mail* that Jean Chretien, "an honorable man," showed an appalling absence of leadership. Second, the continuous stress by the No campaign on dire economic consequences and financial disaster were both hyperbolic and counter-productive.

The campaign on both sides became a deplorable exercise in negativism. There was a lamentable absence of historical sensitivity and a vision of Canada's future.

Listening to the rhetoric on both sides we appeared to be a country without a collective past, without majesty, without greatness, without accomplishments. Canada sank, by default, into a dreary and greyish place — a country with too many pollsters and number-crunching bureaucrats and not enough heroes, poets, artists, writers and philosophers.

We seem to have learned nothing from the referendum in 1980. We bungled Meech Lake and the Charlottetown Accord. At a time like today one is almost inclined to agree with Winston Churchill's definition of history: "That long dismal catalogue of the fruitlessness of experience and the confirmed unteachability of mankind."

Anthony J. Looy is a retired school principal who holds a PhD in history. He and his wife, Janny, are in the process of moving from Ontario to Edmonton.

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Editorials

The death of a prince of peace called Yitzhak

The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin came as a shock to those who are deeply interested in peace in the Middle East. This former soldier had been instrumental in bringing the Palestinian problem, (the central issue demanding resolution since 1948) closer to a solution than anyone before him.

As long as the injustice of preventing the Palestinians from having their own homeland persisted, there could be no peace in the Middle East. Yitzhak Rabin had the courage and the wisdom to realize that he had to talk with the Palestinian Liberation Organization and that he had to give territorial concessions in order to bring peace to Israel and the surrounding countries.

The fanatical wing of orthodox Judaism hated him for that. They live by the Old Testament promises of the covenant and see the yielding of any territory that at one time belonged to Israel under Solomon, as an act of treason. They are tragically caught up in a past that will never return. They are victims of the belief that denies that after Christ, God widened his tent of meeting to include all nations.

God's covenant sets the stage

At the same time, the life and death of Rabin reminded us of the special place that Israel must still have in the heart of God. Where, except in Israel, can one find the kind of spiritual understanding and great leadership in times of great danger and conflict that was evident in Yitzhak Rabin? Perhaps South Africa comes to mind, with great leaders like Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk. But there, too, one talks about a country that has been deeply influenced by the God of Israel.

The words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:25,26 will not leave us alone: "Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved." It would be a mistake on our part to under-estimate what is happening in Israel these days.

Perhaps influenced by this and by the historical significance of Jerusalem, it felt to us as if a prince, a son of David, was being buried on Tuesday, November 7 — a peacemaking prince, whose life foreshadowed the return of the Prince of Peace.

One thing is certain, the sudden death of a great leader is usually a catalyst for change. It remains to be seen whether that change will be for good or ill. Will peace receive a boost as the Israelis seek to honor the memory of Rabin? If so, it will have to happen fast because as leaders of the Likud party indicated, we must not let emotions divert us from the issues. And the issues, according to Likud, are to preserve and strenghten Israeli settlements in the West Bank and to slow down the peace process.

Not that we should worry, ever. God will not be stymied in whatever plans he has for the Middle East and for the world. His kingdom of peace is coming. Rabin had played his part and it was time for him to go. We have all the more reason to sing in this Advent season: "O come, O King of nations, bind/ in one the hearts of all mankind./ Bid all our sad divisions cease/ and be yourself our King of Peace." **BW**

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A slipping work ethic at 24 Sussex Drive

I was seeing an allergist a few days after the forced entry of a knife-wielding man at Prime Minister Jean Chretien's residence on 24 Sussex Drive in Ottawa. "Why d'you think that man was able to come within a few feet of the Prime Minister's bedroom?" the doctor asked me.

"I guess the RCMP was a little too relaxed about security," I answered.

"It was irresponsibility on their part," the doctor replied emphatically, suggesting that he had been stewing over this for a while. The conversation that followed confirmed that he saw this as part of a larger societal problem.

I had to agree with him. I'm usually on the same wavelength, being accustomed to seeing the larger patterns that explain individual behavior, but he caught me a little off-guard that morning. I was more focused on whether or not I should keep on avoiding eggs and potatoes than on whether the work ethic had suffered a severe blow in North American society.

It *is* an ugly stain on the reputation of the RCMP, when you come to think of it. Here they are called upon to protect Canada's prime minister, and a lone assailant is able to spend 45 minutes on the prime minister's property, breaking the glass in a door, entering the house, stalking the halls and coming face to face with Aline Chretien around 2:45 a.m. And then it takes between seven and 10 minutes for the RCMP to respond to her call for help!

These things indicate that even the famed Royal Canadian Mounted Police do not take their job seriously. The very fact that inexperienced officers were assigned to protect the prime minister and his wife shows a carelessness on the part of the force. Further investigations will perhaps show that other careless mistakes have been made. One would think that during the weeks following the narrow outcome of the Quebec referendum in favor of the No side security would be doubled around the federal leader of the No side, especially after Quebec Liberal leader Daniel Johnson's office was firebombed.

The reason we think this is a symptom of a slipping work ethic is that at the heart of a good work ethic is the idea of caring. We are called to be care-takers, people who take their job of caring for the earth and its inhabitants seriously. That includes taking care of the safety of our prime minister. Has the RCMP been too preoccupied with the marketing of their image through Walt Disney to care about the integrity of their work? **BW**

Column

An uncle's (un)happiness Or: How un-Reformed can one get?

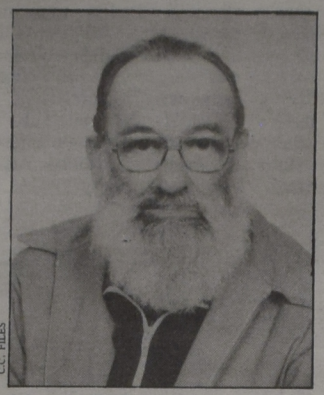
Johannes DeViet
(with tongue firmly in cheek)

I have always been a Christian of the Reformed persuasion. Born in a Reformed family, I was baptized in a Reformed church, where I was duly catechized. I even attended a Reformed grade school and if that's possible — an even more Reformed high school. When I reached the age of discernment I confessed my faith and later I served a number of terms as an elder in, you guessed it, Reformed churches.

I find it worrisome that now, while I'm in my senior years, I detect within me an urge which would do credit to a Roman Catholic, or, as a pastor of my youth was wont to say, a "papist."

My inclination to deviate from tried and true Reformed doctrine was set off by memories of an uncle of mine. My father passed away when I was only 12, and this uncle became almost a substitute father to me.

This father figure was so extremely Reformed that he never went to church! He lived, as I did then, in the Netherlands where Reformed churches of all shades of "Reformedness" were easy to find. But he had never been able to find a church Reformed enough to meet his


C.C. FILES

Johannes DeViet

rigid standards. Some were too legalistic; others were too antinomian; or too open to all winds of doctrine; or too whatever. Some — oh, horror of horrors! — sang hymns; others murdered the psalms by singing them too slowly or too fast; or by using the wrong versification.

If my uncle had lived on this side of the ocean, he might have started his own church. Some years ago I saw in a gospel book store a title which read something like this: "How to Start Your Own Fundamentalist Church." And recently I heard of an organization which is offering advice to people who want to take their church, building and all, out of their "denomination." But Uncle lived in Holland, where, at least then, "denominations" were taken more seriously.

So Uncle stayed home. He bought some books of sermons written a few centuries before his time, when (as he saw it) the Reformed faith was still unsullied by all kinds of modern "winds of doctrine." Sunday after Sunday he read from one of these books to his large family. It troubled him that his younger children, and later his grandchildren, remained unbaptized; but he saw no way to correct this situation.

Some years ago Uncle died, and lately my thoughts often turn to him. I have no reason to doubt Uncle's salvation. He knew that he was a sinner and always in need of forgiveness; he truly believed in the all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and in God's forgiveness merited on the cross for a sinner like himself.

We Reformed people believe that redeemed sinners go straight to heaven when they die, but I really doubt that for my uncle heaven would be a place of bliss. He would be there with people not only from a variety of the Reformed churches he had always eschewed, but even from many non-Reformed communities.

Yes, I know that our God is almighty and that he could change Uncle in an instant at the moment of his death. But it seems to me that such is not God's usual way of working. When a nasty or grouchy person comes to faith, God could change him or her instantly to the sweetest saint that ever lived, but normally a believer faces a lifelong struggle with his or her sinful tendencies. Our almighty God could change our warring world in an instant; instead, God's people are instructed to be peacemakers.

Can you understand now why I have the very un-Reformed urge to pray for my dead uncle's happiness, and why I find it hard to believe that many other very serious but intolerant Christians can really be happy in God's heaven? Or should we expect partitions there, so that people can remain separated?

For my dead uncle partitions would hardly do; he'd need a private suite.

Johannes DeViet is a member of First Christian Reformed Church, London, Ont.

Letters

Who will enforce the laws and pay the taxes?

Two comments in the Oct. 27 CC caught my attention.

First a CLAC spokesperson was quoted as saying that except in the "most overt cases" governments shouldn't deal with discrimination unless it involves persons with disabilities ("Ontario's labor plans get mixed reviews"). Moreover, when discrimination occurs, unions and employees should solve the problems. To top it off, employment equity provisions should apply to judiciary and police services, but not anyone else.

However, the majority of Canadian workers aren't represented by unions. And the evidence is that in the work place, at least, employees are generally the ones who are discriminated against. So who will deal with their grievances? Assuming there are some, who will make and enforce the laws?

And what good policy rationale is there for excluding persons with disabilities? Just because someone is blind or deaf, does that mean that they need to be patronized? Also, what is the Christian argument for applying employment equity provisions to the judiciary and the police but not to others? Frankly, there may be new logic at work here combined with a rather peculiar idea of public policy.

The other comment relates to Maynard VanderGalien's agricultural column. Not surprisingly, the anonymous welfare recipient got beaten up again for refusing to work. Alongside hockey, that's fast becoming the national sport. But, hold it! There are always one's friends, especially teachers. With the author's complicity, they work out a great deal. "Work for hay — no pay, no taxes!"

It's a great example! It shows that even the well-intentioned consciously defraud our government through the "underground" economy. With this kind of evidence, could Revenue Canada ever have a heyday!

Jake Kuiken
Calgary

A puzzling detail, for which, thanks

First, let me express my regrets that I was not available to attend the 50th anniversary celebration on Oct. 7. I was there in spirit, but not in body. I'm glad that the celebration was a very successful one and that it brought together a number of CC supporters from southern Ontario.

After reading the report of the anniversary celebration in the Oct.27 issue of CC, I was, however, puzzled by a detail. The account reports that John Terpstra was accompanied on the piano by an individual named Bart Nameth, who is identified as being the music director at Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Hamilton.

Though it is of no great significance in the history of humankind, I think that perhaps the information is mistaken.

Several alternative explanations present themselves: one, there is somewhere in Hamilton another Chalmers Presbyterian Church; two, our music director, Mr. John Hunse, who happens to be a member of the Christian Reformed Church and a reader of CC, is moonlighting under the name of Bart Nameth; or, three, Bart Nameth is very tardy in putting in an appearance here at Chalmers to carry out his musical duties.

I'm so glad, nevertheless, that Chalmers Presbyterian Church could somehow be represented even though I was not able to be there personally. Please convey my thanks to whoever made that possible.

Had I been present, I would have wished to convey to you my best wishes, both to CC and to yourself for God's blessing and guidance in the years ahead.

Robert J.Bernhardt, Pastor of
Chalmers Presbyterian Church
Hamilton, Ont.

Reply:

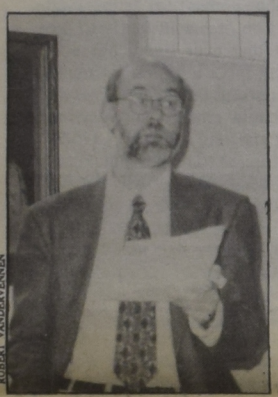
There is another alternative explanation: we goofed. It turns out that Bart Nameth is director of music at St. Cuthbert's Presbyterian Church in Hamilton.

Editor

Christianity is a sleeping giant at Canadian universities

Robert VanderVennen

TORONTO, Ont. — A Christian student may feel like a lost sheep on a university campus, not knowing whether there are other Christian students or professors. University professors who are Christian may not know whether members of their own department are Christian or not.



ROBERT VANDERVENNEN

Jitse van der Meer says that faith underlies science.

But many of them are, said George Rawlyk, professor of history at Queen's University, at a recent meeting of the Canadian Scientific and Christian Affiliation (CSCA) at the University of Toronto. He and pollster Angus Reid recently heard that 42 per cent of arts and humanities students at Queen's, York and the University of Toronto say that Christianity is important to them day by day, and 52 per cent say that the death and resurrection of Jesus provides forgiveness of their own sins.

David Humphreys, high-profile chemistry professor who has recently retired from McMaster University, urged other professors not to make the same mistake he did in not making clear in earlier years his Christian convictions. Christians on secular campuses need to support each other, and especially support Christian students, said biologist Gary Partlow of the University of Guelph, chairperson of the board of CSCA.

Opposes rationalism

The connection between faith and academic work is a potential point of contact between Christians on secular campuses, said Jitse van der Meer of Redeemer College's Pascal Centre. But van der Meer is concerned about religious conservatism (not often enough distinguished from orthodoxy) which he said often rejects mainstream science. He urged his colleagues to help students recognize the religious abuse of science.

Van der Meer argued against a rationalistic approach both to the Bible and to science. Rationalism overrates the importance of reason in science, not adequately understanding the importance of faith to scientific understanding, he said.

Science does not produce objective knowledge. That is widely believed, and it obstructs the Christian faith, he said. We need to advertise that scientific knowledge is not really objective, but is more personal than it was thought to be in the past.

Yet we must show how to deal with the relativism of postmodernism. Relativism and objectivity are two sides of the same coin, van der Meer stated.

Witness and integration

At times the discussion tended to emphasize witnessing on campus as winning converts to Christ, and at other times to focus on involving issues of science and faith, though the two are not at odds with each other.

Janine Langen described "The Christian and Culture" program she set up at St. Michael's College, which has a Christianity and science component. Thaddeus Trenn of the University of Toronto, who chaired the day's meetings, called attention to a week's workshop on the design of courses in science and religion that he and Don McNally are spearheading at that university next summer. Larry Offner of Inter-Varsity stressed evangelistic witness on campus.

University students joined the discussion to identify Christian witness or its absence on their campuses. "The Church in the John" is effective at McMaster University, and the University of Toronto students have set up a discussion forum known as the "Areopagus."

Students often give up on churches because they don't find persons interested in the questions they are dealing with as Christians. About half of evangelical churches hold that the earth is not more than 10,000 years old, a recent survey has shown, while less then one per cent of university scientists hold that view.

Christian resources

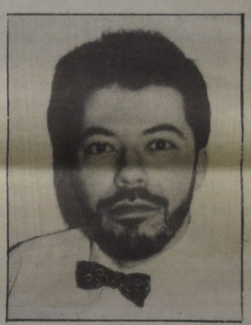
A positive note is that there are resources to help Christian professors and university students. Van der Meer identified those at the Pascal Centre, and the resources of the Institute for Christian Studies were mentioned. Networking of Christians on the computer Internet was urged as a valuable resource by Don McNally.

Daniel Osmond of the University of Toronto said that the American Scientific Affiliation, the parent of CSCA, was started in 1941 "to take scholarship back from unbelievers." In 1973 he and others started the Canadian branch, CSCA, in part as a witness against compartmentalization of faith and science. CSCA tries to work closely with Inter-Varsity and campus chaplains.

A net loss of justice

POLITICS

David Koyzis



On Monday, Oct. 30, the Quebec electorate came within a hair's breadth of taking an action that could have led to the breakup of Canada. If you were like me, you were probably sitting nervously in front of the television that evening with your eyes glued to the bottom of the screen where fractions of percentages were dancing back and forth between Yes and No for nearly three hours. And you were probably frustrated that some two-and-a-half million people were deciding the fate of an entire country.

You may also have been wondering how we ought to go about addressing the current crisis in an integral Christian fashion. There are no simple panaceas to offer here. It's easy to get caught up in worrying about the falling dollar and rising interest rates and how these might concretely affect our lives. It's not always easy to look at the larger picture. But is Canada worth preserving?

God on our side?

One of my students told me he had been to a church the previous Sunday where the pastor prayed for Canadian unity and in so doing offered the opinion that the division of a nation is displeasing to God.

This goes too far, in my view. While I certainly believe we are better off with a united Canada than without one, I do not believe that God somehow values territorial integrity in and of itself, especially if this is an obstacle to justice. There is no particular virtue in having one country where there might be two — provided, of course, that the two countries are willing to live in peace with each other.

All the same, I think there is a case to be made for preserving Canadian unity from the vantage point of maintaining and facilitating the doing of public justice. The breakup of Canada would unleash considerable difficulties that would have grave ramifications for people across Canada, particularly those in Quebec itself.

The principal argument in favor of sovereignty is the persistent sense of many Quebecois (especially francophones) that an historic injustice has been perpetrated against their people by the now dominant English-speaking community. To many sovereigntists, an independent Quebec would reverse the defeat of 1759 on the Plains of Abraham.

This is a strong argument that resonates with many ordinary Quebecois, who fear an eventual disappearance of the French fact in North America. But these fears are almost certainly unfounded, and Quebec's unique culture is capable of being quite fully protected, and thereby of receiving justice, within Canada.

Second-class citizens

On the other hand, dividing Canada threatens many with *in*justice. If Jacques Parizeau's unguarded comments on the evening of the referendum are any indication, a sovereign Quebec dominated by nationalists could become a kind of majoritarian tyranny in which non-francophones would be accorded *de facto* second-class citizenship. Already the week before the referendum, the Cree and Inuit in Quebec's north decided in their own votes that they would not be part of a separate Quebec. If Ottawa were to allow the province's separation within its present borders, it would be abandoning aboriginal groups to whom it is obligated both by treaty and by the Constitution Act, 1982.

These are only a few of the problems that could arise in the event of Quebec's attempted separation. Because the difficulties attendant upon the breakup of Canada would likely result in a net loss of justice, I believe there is good reason to work and pray for continued unity.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont.

Family videos

Media/Arts

A sumptuous retelling of a classic children's story

Marian Van Til

A Little Princess

Eleanor Bron, Liam Cunnigham, Liesel Matthews, Rusty Schwimmer, Vanessa Lee Chester, Errol Sitahal
Screenplay by Richard Labravenese and Elizabeth Chandler, based on the novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett
Directed by Alfonso Cuaron

The English-born Frances Hodgson moved to Knoxville, Kentucky, with her parents and siblings in 1865, a year before she began her writing career as a children's novelist and eight years before she married Swan Burnett, an American doctor. So it's not strange that her three now classic stories — *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886), *A Little Princess* (1905), and *The Secret Garden* (1911) — all involve children who suffer cultural and familial displacement.

Sara Crew is the "princess" who grows up in India with her widowed father, a British army officer, to whom she is particularly close. But in 1914, when she's only nine or ten, her papa must go off to fight the war in Europe. Captain Crew believes he is doing the best for Sara by sending her to the upper-class Miss Minchen Seminary for Girls (a boarding school) in New York City. The school is run by the acerbic Miss Minchen and her gentler sister, Amelia.

Self-esteem breeds hope

The story chronicles the lively and imaginative Sara's fight for belonging and normalcy under the mean-spirited, heavy hand of the social-climbing Miss Minchen. Miss Minchen wins battles, but never the war. Sara has an extraordinarily sturdy self-image, instilled in her by her parents who have told her that she is "a little princess."

Sara knows that this means not that she is superior to others, but that she — and every girl — is a unique and special person. Thus psychologically armed, she is able to withstand Miss Minchen's onslaughts, befriend any girl who wishes her friendship, and help others see their own worth.

Even when a seeming tragedy reverses her fortunes, Sara's innate kindness continues to show itself. An Indian tale about a princess rescued by her prince intertwines with the details of Sara's own life.

Of course, all works out in the end. Sara's goodness is rewarded and Miss Minchen gets her just deserts. In true Victorian fashion, a la Dickens, this is a moral tale in which virtue is eventually rewarded.

This is a well-acted, visually sumptuous film adaptation which sticks reasonably closely to Burnett's story — it will undoubtedly push young viewers to read the book. Any child who has experienced loss or had her self-esteem dashed by peers, or even teachers or other adults, will relate particularly keenly to this story (though in life, things don't always turn out as well as they do in this story). This family film should appeal especially to girls through about age 11.

The ultimate critique of television is that it never shows families sitting around mindlessly watching TV.

Barbara Ehrenreich in *The Worst Years of Our Lives: Irreverent Notes from a Decade of Creed.*

Feeling like an alien

Back Home

Stars Hayley Mills, Hayley Carr, Jean Anderson, Rupert Frazer, Brenda Bruce
Screenplay by David Wood, from the book by Michelle Magorian
Directed by Piers Haggard

I don't recall that this five-year-old film ever actually hit the theatres in North America. If it didn't, it should have. This Disney production filmed in Britain is an unexpected gem of a family movie. It has beautiful cinematography, good acting and directing, excellent characterizations and generally satisfying character development, as well as a thoughtful approach to the several social and family relationship issues it raises. It's that rare kind of film that, though suitable for kids, will keep adults' attention too, perhaps even sticking with you for a while after you've seen it.

Where is home?

In 1940, before the film's time line, seven-year-old Virginia (aka "Rusty") was evacuated from Britain to the U.S. by her parents to keep her safe during the war. Her father was an officer in the British army and her mother learned to be a mechanic for the war effort. No one knew, of course, that it would be five years before the family was reunited.

When Rusty returns home (the film's present) it is no longer *home*. She's "back home"; yet "back home" is with the people she now knows and loves best, the American family with whom she lived. In five years she has grown from a small child to an adolescent; she has an American accent and is used to American culture and attitudes.

She's not at all prepared for her very proper grandmother, her emotionally distant father, or the relentless snobbishness of her schoolmates and their disdain for her lack of knowledge and even deliberate carelessness about "the way things are done."

Rusty learns to love her mother again, and the little brother she has never seen; her father is another story.

She finds the possibility for solace when during a class trip into town she inadvertently meets a boy who had also spent the war in the U.S. They devise a way to meet each other surreptitiously and they quickly become soulmates.

Several layers

There are several subtexts in the film: Rusty's mother's personal development from nearly helpless sweet young thing to a woman confident that she has something to offer both her family and others; her little brother's fixation on the American officer who became their friend but is now back home with his own family; Rusty's father's extremely dependent relationship on his own mother; the changed marriage relationship of Rusty's parents due to the personal changes each has gone through; and their now different approach to parenthood.

These inter-relationships are developed relatively subtly. Though the story has a happy ending, not every relationship is neatly wrapped up at the end.

This is an excellent movie for family discussion, or for group discussion with adolescents.

Rapper tries to live his faith

With files from The Catholic Register

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. — One of the first times James Todd Smith, aka rapper LL Cool J, sang in public was as part of an elementary school choir which performed for Pope John Paul II during the pontiff's visit to New York City in 1979. Smith remembers that as "a beautiful experience."

Growing up in New York Smith first heard "rap" when he was nine or 10 years old, he says. Calling himself LL Cool J, he sold his own first rap album at age 16. Recently he has become successful enough to start his own record label. Still serious about his faith, he named his company POG, an abbreviation for "Power of God."

Cool J insisted on a label name that had what he calls "spiritual overtones," a name which would "keep God involved." POG will release its first recordings some time next year.

LL Cool J has won a Grammy for his album *Mama Said Knock You Out*, an album which contains no profanity — very rare among rappers. He acknowledges the need for improvement in rap lyrics generally, but sees a lot of the nastiness in rap as "a cry for help. Like an animal that is wounded, it fights back," he says. "It comes out of its corner and tries to get you."

Cool J acts as well as raps. He has had small roles in several movies and currently stars in the NBC sitcom *In the House*. He plays an injured NFL player who rents out his house to cut expenses while training to make a comeback.

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Church

Seafarers ministries on both coasts await your Christmas parcels

Marian Van Til

VANCOUVER/MONTREAL — The Christian Reformed Church has two seafarers' ministries in Canada, one in Montreal, the other in Vancouver; the first is supported largely by the congregations of Classis Eastern Canada; the latter, by the congregations of the two B.C. classes.

The ministries give away from 2,000 to 4,000 Christmas parcels each year as part of their Christmas outreach, and they count on you to provide those parcels.

"Your gifts are a tangible sign that Christians *do* care about the men and women at sea who are away from their loved ones for eight to 10 months at a time, and who miss them very much, especially at Christmas time," says a news release from the Vancouver ministry. "We pray that these presents will again point our seafarers to the true Christmas gift of Jesus Christ, in whose name these gifts are presented."

The Montreal ministry seconds that with a hearty "Amen!"

The Montreal Seafarers Centre accompanies its parcels with a letter of greeting from its staff, and a New Testament or some other Christian literature.

Vancouver options

There is "still quite a difference in wages" among seafarers, says the Vancouver ministry, so it tries to give the more expensive gifts to the less well-off seafarers. That can be done by asking those of you who send parcels there to indicate the value of those parcels. The system for denoting parcel value is as follows:

Securely wrap your parcel after you have enclosed a Christmas card with your personal greeting. Address the parcel to "A Seafarer," and note on the top right-hand corner (postage area) the approximate value of your gift, with the corresponding letter:

Value	*Mark your gift*
$4-7	A
$8-11	B
$12-15	C

Some gift suggestions for the Vancouver ministry:

Writing pad and envelopes; photo album; games; jigsaw puzzles; shoe-shine kit; music tapes; wallet; B.C. souvenirs; warm gloves; small alarm clock; baseball cap; soap-on-a-rope; large chocolate bar; paint-by-number sets; after-shave lotion; handkerchiefs; socks, scarf, toque; packaged candies; picture frame; boxed coffee mug; nail clippers; video; solar cell calculator; bath towel.

Send your parcel(s) to:
Ministry to Seafarers
7449 Kerr Street
Vancouver, BC V5S 3E3

Montreal options

The Montreal ministry suggests that "to insure the parcels are of equal value," you should:

1. Fill a small box, such as a shoebox, completely. (It's better to have a small full box than a big box that contains a lot of tissue paper.

2. Enclose a Christmas card with a personal note and your name and address.

3. Enclose one or more from each of the following three groups:

(a) scarf, toque, gloves, socks; (b) writing pad and envelopes, address book, ballpoint pens, scissors, scotch tape, calendar; (c) packaged candy, after-shave lotion; cologne, game or puzzle, handkerchief, musical recording or anything else you can think of (see Vancouver list).

4. Wrap the parcel in attractive paper.

(If you send more than one parcel, or do it jointly with others, put the parcels in a large box; sending by bus is cheaper than by mail.)

Send your parcel(s) to:
The Seafarers Centre
201 rue de la Commune Ouest
Montreal, PQ H2Y 2C9

Choose whichever ministry is closest to you, and please ACT NOW. The ministries need your parcels well before Christmas.

Chinese Christian in detention after receiving 'contraband' Bibles

Andrew Wark

HONG KONG (NNI) — A 30-year-old Chinese Christian remains in detention in the southwestern Chinese city of Kunming after he was arrested by Public Security Bureau officials in late September and accused of receiving and distributing Bibles that had been clandestinely imported.

Five Australian Christians and an American tourist were also detained and interrogated by security officials but were released the same day.

According to Hong Kong church sources, the Kunming man and a female associate were arrested after security officials intercepted a "Bible transfer" being carried out between the foreign Christians and the Chinese nationals outside Kunming's international airport. Sources told NNI that the foreigners were loading some 22 suitcases containing more than 1,000 Bibles in the Chinese Christians' van when they were surrounded by security officers.

The officials then reportedly dragged the two Chinese house church Christians out of the van, handcuffed them and forced them into a waiting vehicle.

Bible is 'reactionary religious literature'

Authorities escorted the six foreign Christians to a local Public Security Bureau center, where they were individually interrogated for more than five hours regarding their relationship with the two Chinese nationals. The tourists were then released from custody.

According to sources, although officials retained the foreigners' passports for two days after the incident, their Chinese visas were not cancelled, and group members were politely told by a representative of the security bureau that they were "free to enjoy the rest of their stay in Kunming."

During the incident, Public Security Bureau officials confiscated the entire shipment of foreign-printed Bibles as well as the van that was used in the transfer. The two Kunming Christians were taken to a local Public Security Bureau detention center and held *incommunicado*. While it is still not known whether the young woman remains in police custody, sources have confirmed the ongoing detention of her male associate.

This is the second time the detained Kunming man has been taken into custody for distributing foreign-printed Bibles. In December 1991, he was arrested and held in detention for three months after security officials uncovered "reactionary" religious literature during a raid on his apartment.

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Zion CRC opts out of area Reformation Day service

Bert Witvoet

OSHAWA, Ont. — For the first time in its history, the council of Zion Christian Reformed Church decided not to join other area churches in celebrating Reformation Day.

After last year's Reformation Day service, several of those who had organized that service met and decided not to plan one for the coming year.

Celebrating a divorce

Dr. Henry Wildeboer, pastor of Zion, explains why. "I struggle with the idea of a celebration that honors the Reformation," he writes in his church's newsletter. "There's a doubleedness to it. I am deeply grateful for Reformers who called the church back to the Word. It was needed. But the overall result was a church 'divorce' in which Roman Catholics and Protestant churches parted ways."

Wildeboer compares having a celebrative Reformation event to a wife's leaving her husband for very good reasons and then throwing a party every anniversary of her divorce. "The Bible makes plain that church splits grieve God," writes Wildeboer.

Instead of having a joint Reformation Day service once a year, he suggests having a joint Thanksgiving service in October or an annual regional "birthday party" on the eve of Pentecost. "Those are two *real* celebrative events," writes Wildeboer.

But even then, Wildeboer wants area churches to look at two other issues that arise from having a joint service: closing the doors of individual churches, which should be open to visitors, and the expense of renting facilities and paying for a speaker. He estimates that a Reformation Day service costs around $1000 to $1500, money that could be used for missions.

Church

Countering 'the flag of the tribe'

Andrew Kuyvenhoven CHAPTER & VERSE

The Christian religion claims that it can make people transcend their ethnic origins. The bonds of baptism into Christ unite people more intimately than the heritage of earthly roots and races. But we seldom see that.

Almost 40 years ago my wife and I organized a Vacation Bible School somewhere in New Jersey. On the first day we mixed all the white, brown and black children. But at the end of the week every race sat with its own group, not because they hated the others but because they felt more comfortable that way.

Since then I have seen numerous people from many races and ethnic groups (but mostly Dutch and Frisian) whose behavior, when push came to shove, appeared to be more influenced by their first birth than by their second. The original blood-and-soil conditioning ("Blut und Boten," the Nazis said) governs the behavior of millions, from ancient times until today.

Endless division

On November 11 we observed the armistice of the Great War in which millions of French- and English-speaking human beings killed German-speaking people (and vice versa). Twenty-one years later (in 1939) the German *Reich* had developed this race-and-soil story into a lugubrious idol that bloodied the globe as never before.

Recently, in Rwanda, bad blood between two tribes caused death or displacement to hundreds of thousands. The United Nations cannot stop the wars in the Balkan region. And belief in neither Christ nor Mohammed has changed the primitive creed of race, blood and ethnic illusions among the tribes of former Yugoslavia. As a matter of fact, church and mosque seem to sanctify these bloody feuds of extended families. And in Quebec the racial war — with ballots, not bullets — is still unfinished after 128 years.

But the dream is in the Bible: Psalm 87 predicts that Africans and Iraqis, Jews and Arabs will confess to be soul-brothers and Spirit-sisters. "And on the roll of nations he will count all these as born on Zion's holy mount." That vision becomes reality at Pentecost. At Babel, race and language divided the world (Gen. 11); at Pentecost one Name is proclaimed in all languages by one Spirit (Acts 2). Now the whole world must be baptized into Christ and all nations must become disciples of one Master (Matt. 28:19).

Spirit overcomes natural prejudice

In the first Christian church, Jews and Gentiles were united. But a potential racial conflict remained: "The Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food" (Acts 6:1 NRSV). Yet they solved their problem by appointing people "full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5). If you are full of faith and Spirit you overcome your natural ethnic prejudices.

In Christ there are no foreigners and aliens; we all are citizens of one people and belong to one family, no matter where we happened to be born (Eph. 2:19, Gal. 3:28, etc.). It's the second birth that counts. But the world-wide church has failed to teach that clearly. Too often it merely defends the flag of the tribe.

Andrew Kuyvenhoven is a retired pastor of the Christian Reformed Church and lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Bulgarian teacher fired for 'covering up' activities of banned Protestant group

Willy Fautre

BRUSSELS, Belgium (NNI)-- The Bulgarian Ministry of Education has fired a principal in the northern city of Rousse for allegedly turning a blind eye to the activities of a banned Protestant group.

Anelia Kristeva, principal of the Shipbuilding Vocational School, was dismissed on October 20 on the grounds that she "covered up" activities in her school organized by members of the Word of Life Protestant missionary group. Word of Life is among more than 20 religious groups in Bulgaria denied official registration in 1994.

According to local reports, the controversy began when it was discovered that four out of eight new teachers hired by Kristeva in 1994 were Word of Life members. The four teachers left the school last August when their contacts were not renewed.

Interrogations

However, on September 25 the Sofia-based *24 Hours* daily newspaper published a report headlined: "The Special Services Spotted the Nest of a Religious Sect in a School in Rousse." Since the report appeared, several teachers and students from the school have been interrogated about any connections to the Word of Life group.

Sources denied that Word of Life was conducting religious activities at the school.

Kristeva, who said she is not a member of Word of Life or any other religious minority group, was disciplined by education officials for failing to take "necessary measures" and for protecting "members of the sect."

'Proof' beyond a doubt

On September 11, *The Standard* newspaper in Rousse and 24 Hours paper in Sofia reported that an inquiry had been set up against Kristeva, but District Prosecutor Lyulin Matev refused to begin preliminary legal proceedings against the principal, citing inconsistent evidence.

However, on September 18, Matev issued a statement declaring: "The inspection assigned to the Security Services has proved beyond any doubt that the principal of the Shipbuilding Vocational School, Anelia Georgieva Kristeva, has permitted the presence and has tolerated the activities of representatives of the Word of Life religious sect in the educational institution entrusted to her."

Matev added that activities taking place in the school "are contrary to the provisions of the Law on Religious Denominations ... and violate the norms and regulations of the Ministry of Education."

'Grave concern'

Some church analysts in Bulgaria have expressed concern that the investigation carried out by the Security Service could signal a reinstitution of state supervision over individual convictions as was practiced during the communist era.

"The Ministry of Education is entitled to carry out an inquiry so as to know whether there is a violation of the Law on Public Education, but the fact that the National Security Service was involved in the inquiry is a matter of great concern," said Emil Cohen, director of Project Citizens for Tolerance in Bulgaria, in an NNI interview.

One of Bulgaria's largest cities, Rousse has been the site of religious tensions since last year, when several religious minority churches were subject to written threats, negative media articles and vandalism. On June 10, a group of skinheads attacked the Church of God in Rousse. Some 300 worshipers were held captive for several hours, and seven church members were severely beaten.

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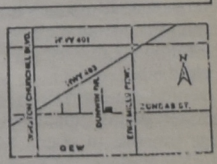

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Feature

Politicizing 'family values'

Dobson equates conservative with biblical

Bill Van Dyk

Do you believe in "Family Values"? Most Christians would say Yes without hesitation. But when an idea acquires the lustre of an icon — and Family Values has that lustre — there is always a danger that it will be used to justify or support other ideas that may or may not be good. In fact, the icon of Family Values has become so intensely bright over the last few years that I think it may be blinding us. A very large, powerful political agenda has appropriated the term and is marching forward in its name, but few of the items on this agenda have anything to do with building up and strengthening the family.

What's he talking about?

Dr. James Dobson, the founder and leader of Focus on the Family has become a leading Family Values spokesperson. In pamphlets, newsletters, videos and books he tirelessly promotes Family Values, and he proposes a very specific course of action which he says will restore the family to its proper place of importance.

In support of his cause, he recently issued an eight-page newsletter attacking the Beijing Women's Conference as "the most radical, atheistic and anti-family crusade in the history of the world." Dobson says that "if they have their way, the family as it has been known since antiquity will cease to exist."

I followed the Beijing conference with interest. I didn't agree with everything said at the conference, but I thought most of its goals were praiseworthy. When I read Dobson's comments, which were quoted widely in the mainstream press, I couldn't understand what he was talking about.

The final draft of the final statement of the Women's Conference addresses the international community. Among other things, the women at this conference ask all nations to strive to eliminate from their societies the following practises:

* child labor
* genital mutilation carried out against young females (common practise in many African Moslem nations, the purpose of which is to deprive women of all sexual pleasure)
* exploitive labor practises
* violence against women and children
* rape as an instrument of war

Some delegates tried to include a defense of the rights of homosexual unions, but they were voted down by the majority.

Dobson's attack on the Beijing Conference begins by listing many of the known human rights violations carried out in China under its repressive communist government. He states that President Clinton and his wife, Hillary, should be ashamed of committing the resources of the U.S. government to the conference. Dobson is right to be outraged by the "breathtaking wickedness" of China's government, but he doesn't explain why this should mean that the conference itself was evil.

Room only for conservatives

There is something about this leap that doesn't make sense unless you explore Dobson's ideas further. In his book *Children at Risk* (co-written with former Reagan policy adviser Gary L. Bauer), Dobson offers an endless list of government policies that he says are anti-family.

The problem is, Dobson's choice of policies is highly political. So he condemns Bill Clinton, the Democrat, for sending a delegation to the conference in Beijing; but never mentions that Richard Nixon, the Republican, opened relations with communist China in the first place; or that George Bush (Republican) was the president who chose to continue relations with China after the massacre of students in Tianamen Square. Furthermore, he condemns Jimmy Carter and other Democrats for supporting "anti-family" policies, but praises even extremist Republicans like Jesse Helms (a flack for the tobacco industry) for his "pro-family" policies. He likes Newt Gingrich, though Gingrich's personal life is hardly the model of a "family man."

The problem with this is that Dobson claims to stand for *Christian* values and he claims that the Bible is the cornerstone of his social views. If he is standing firmly on the Bible, I would expect that his politics would be a little less uniformly conservative Republican, and that he might find *some* good ideas outside of his narrow, extremely conservative political landscape, and some bad ideas within it.

The problem with Dobson, and with a lot of other leaders of the "religious right" in the U.S. and Canada, is that his religion is completely enmeshed with conservative politics and the "gospel of wealth"; and very few of his political ideas really benefit families at all, except for upper-income families.

Politicized view

Under the inadequate U.S. health care system, thousands of under-insured families are bankrupted every year when hit by catastrophic emergency medical costs. Some elderly couples obtain a divorce for the sole reason of preventing financial liabilities from being assigned to the healthy or surviving spouse and family. Young children and pregnant mothers often do not receive adequate preventive care.

I think the Canadian system, which was first proposed by the NDP and enacted by the Liberals, is more "pro-life," since it eliminates the possibility that a family member can become an intolerable financial burden because of illness. It allows children and expectant mothers to receive adequate medical care. It ensures that most citizens, wealthy or not, receive equal access to clinics and hospitals.

No analyzing of ideas

In Dobson's politicized view of Christian society, however, only the ultra-expensive, wasteful, and unequal present U.S. system can be permitted. The Canadian system sees our society as a community that cares and provides for each other's needs. But Dobson supports an individualistic approach that sees society as a collection of competing interests which must all look out for themselves. Yet he claims that his view is more "biblical."

I am also uncomfortable with Dobson's writing style. For one thing, I would think that a Christian (unlike a politician) would focus on discussion and analysis of the ideas presented,

C.C. FILES

Dr. James Dobson

some reflection on how the gospel relates to these issues and how Christians should respond. Instead, Dobson makes personal attacks on the character of the participants of the Beijing Conference without addressing any of their statements or proposals.

He claims, for example, that Bella Abzug, a prominent feminist, was a supporter of Josef Stalin during her college days (about 50 years ago). This has nothing to do with whether Abzug's ideas about preventing spousal abuse make sense or not today. In formal debate, these kind of statements are called "labelling." They are also known as "smear tactics."

Shameless innuendo

Dobson also indulges in sensationalism. In a discussion of feminist study courses at universities, he quotes conservative writer Dale O'Leary approvingly: "Many mothers, who sent their lovely daughters off to college to prepare for careers, are weeping, because their daughters have come home with lesbian lovers." This is a sensational, shocking statement. Unfortunately, it is representative of Dobson's style of presentation: tell a shocking story, incite the reader to feelings of outrage, then offer a supposed "remedy."

Now we may not agree with *all* the ideals of feminism, but I think most of us would acknowledge that some of the accomplishments of feminism have been good for our society. Feminists have stood firmly against spousal violence, unfair and exploitive labor practises, child sexual abuse, leniency for rapists, sexual harassment, exploitation and pornography.

But Dobson accepts none of this. He really believes that these evils are, in the first place, not the results of patriarchy or sexism or the inferior status of women, but purely the result of liberal social attitudes, and he wants to sweep feminism away with one sensationalized statement: *Your daughter might become a lesbian.* Once again, you might agree or disagree with Dobson, but it is hard to respect the way he makes his case. A Christian can certainly stand on his or her principles without resorting to shameless innuendo.

Uncritical acceptance disturbing

It concerns me that many Christians uncritically accept this kind of discussion from Dobson. Indeed, many seem to *admire* it. Whether one agrees with his conclusion or not, I don't think this kind of writing reflects well on the Christian community. How do we feel when some newspaper journalists describe with relish Jim Bakker's or Jimmy Swaggart's well-known sins, and then uses them to attack the church and Christianity itself? We rightly object that the church does not stand or fall on the basis of any one person's particular faults. We *should* object when a Christian writer does the same thing.

Finally, we should be concerned about the way conservative Republicans in the U.S., and, to a much lesser extent, Progressive Conservatives and Reformers in Canada, are attempting to appropriate the label of "Family Values" and use it as a smoke-screen to mask their real policies.

The true agenda is in the U.S. Congressional Record every day, and it has to do with deregulation, lowering the minimum wage, reducing the rights of workers and consumers, weakening regulatory protection for the environment, and shifting the tax burden away from the rich and onto the shoulders of the middle-class and the poor. We should not allow people like Dobson to sidetrack us from a responsible debate about the real issues.

Bill Van Dyk is a computer consultant in Kitchener, Ont.

Feature

I feed your children

John Tissot

I am a teacher. In some of my classes, the first five minutes go like this.

"Mr. Tissot, I have a doctor's appointment."

"Now?"

"Yes. You want me to take the quiz first?"

"If you want."

"Or do you want me to take it tomorrow?"

"Whatever you want."

Another voice: "Mr. Tissot?"

"Yes?"

"Look. I did my homework for today. Aren't you proud of me?"

"Yes, I'm very proud."

Still another voice: "Mr. Tissot?"

"Yes."

"I left my homework in my locker. Can I go get it?"

"Yes."

From several rows away: "Mr. Tissot?"

"Yes?"

"I always sit there and Reuben won't let me."

"You know it's first-come, first-sit in this class."

The two students solve their own problem, but mine continues.

I am sure you see what is happening here. I am feeding your children. No, not with milk, cereal and a banana. I am dishing out attention. They crave attention the way a man who hasn't eaten in two days craves food of any kind, and he isn't particular if he eats scraps or steak.

This take-and-give could go on and on. But since I must teach, I call a halt whether I have fed all the children or not. If I haven't dished out enough attention, they seek it from their classmates... to the detriment of my lesson.

You may think this is an elementary classroom and the children are seven years old. Not so. I teach in a high school, and my students are 15 and 16.

Insatiable need

This year I have a boy in one class named Joe. He's about 16. Every day I hand back the previous day's quiz. And every day he comes up to me *before* class starts to talk about his paper.

He doesn't really care about the grade he gets in my class, but he does want attention. So we talk about his paper. And I never let on that I understand what we are doing.

Then there was Nick. He absorbed every ounce of attention I could give. One day, outside of class, I gave him a full hour of my undivided attention. But there weren't enough hours in my day to satisfy his need for attention.

In one 50-minute class, I have 25 students. I could give each student two minutes of my personal attention — if I did nothing more than that. With six classes in a day, and the other teachers also devoting the entire class period to giving personal attention, students would receive a daily ration of 12 minutes of attention per day.

I hate to say this, but I suspect that those 12 minutes of attention and appreciation would be more than many of my students get at home.

Some parents send their children to school with only a cup of coffee or perhaps a piece of toast. Do they expect children to understand how their government functions, to solve for a value of X, or to conjugate a verb when an important function of the body is demanding that something be done?

Money isn't the key

True, some families are too poor to feed their children in the morning, and the children go off to school without a sack lunch or lunch money. Fortunately, the federal government fills their stomachs free at lunch time.

However, no amount of federal spending can fill their emotional need for attention. Only you and I can do that. And since my classes are larger than 25 (one has 46 students) your share must be greater than mine.

You hold the key. You send your Tom and your Mary to school, and you expect them to learn. As an educator with over 20 years in the classroom, let me emphasize that if you send your child to school emotionally starved, you are throwing your tax dollars down the drain.

I know you've been told and retold that you must give your child personal attention at home. You've been told to play games with your child when he or she is old enough — marbles, miniature golf, picnics in the park.

Here's something that may not have occurred to you. Every time your child makes a request — "Can I borrow the car Saturday night?"; "Can I go to Becky's party?" — he or she opens the door to personal attention.

'Maybe' helps interaction

Some parents agree to every request: "I don't like to restrict my children," they say. I believe that every Yes closes the door to communication. After a parent has agreed to a child's request, what else is left to say?

A No, however, is rich with possibilities for discussion. Some parents have told me, "When I say no to my child, that's it. No discussion." What a golden opportunity wasted! Haven't they heard of the word "maybe"?

When your child asks for something use the moment for giving him or her attention and discussion — even if you already know what your final answer will be.

"How am I going to talk to my boy?" one woman asked me at a Back-to-School night. "He's a big 16, and we have nothing in common."

At the time, I wasn't quick enough to give her an answer. But if I had a second chance, I'd make this suggestion:

"When you buy groceries, don't you need help carrying sacks? Take your son with you. If he's eating your food, he can help you bring it home, and so much the better for both of you. On the way to and from the store, you'll find something to talk about."

That is just one example of an opportunity for interaction. It's not much, but it's something.

Physical and emotional consequences

Dr. Lytt Gardener, a leading pediatrician, said this in a U.S. national newspaper: "Conclusive evidence from recent studies shows that when a child is unloved — or under great emotional stress — his brain activates a chemical which actually dries up his growth hormones. I have seen cases of stunted growth and even dwarfism caused by loneliness in some of America's wealthiest homes. The symptoms are those of classical malnutrition."

CC. FILES

37 seconds a day

Just how little attention do some children get at home? Dr. James Dobson says, "A recent study, done with concealed microphones, showed that middle-class fathers speak to their children an average of 37 seconds a day."

This, apparently, leaves the burden in the lap of the mothers. Some, asserts Dr. Dobson, are too busy being "liberated" to give attention to their children.

The result of this emotional neglect can go beyond stunted growth.

Plants deprived of attention (water, food) wither and may die, but they don't kill themselves. We are seeing children just barely old enough to get a driver's license do just that — kill themselves.

At a faculty meeting, a man talked to us about teenage suicide. *Could such a tragedy strike our school?* we wondered. It did. A little less than a month later, one of our students put a bullet in his brain. We heard that his parents were "away for the weekend."

Our expert had told us: "Attempts at suicide are cries for attention."

Let's put a new perspective on the problem, one that everyone understands: money.

You pay my salary with your taxes. Do you want to pay me for doing those things which you could be doing yourself — giving your child love and attention?

No 'attention stamps'

The truth is that some parents who criticize teachers for being "babysitters" are forcing that task on us. Yes, we teachers often have to babysit your child. But only because you want it that way.

What you put on the dinner table is your concern. If money is scarce, the government will help with food stamps. But the government does not dispense attention stamps.

My teaching contract says nothing about "feeding" your children. If your children are starving for attention, I will give them some. But it won't be enough. Only you as a parent, can give them the amount of attention they really need to stay healthy.

John Tissot is from Carpinteria, Calif.

Health/Nutrition

The answer to life's problems is not in the refrigerator

COURTESY LEE HILL-NELSON

Lee Nelson and her refrigerator

Lee Hill-Nelson

One early morning as I walked across the church parking lot on my way to work I looked down and saw my feet. For a moment I was startled. As the result of a weight-loss program I had lost 25 pounds in five months. My stomach was flat. I could see my feet.

The pounds were gone. The program was over. Now what?

I was on my own. A friend said he read that nine out of 10 people gain back their weight after losing it.

"That's a high percentage," I said. "There's too much pain in loosing. I'll never gain it back." *Never* is a long time, but I assured myself I had only to keep the weight off one day at a time.

Shopping for skirts, blouses, belts and regular-sized panty hose was something I had wanted to do for years. And now I was having fun wearing such clothes.

Keeping weight off requires changing your lifestyle. You must ask yourself the question, "Am I willing to discipline myself in order to change my lifestyle?"

The Apostle Paul wrote, "For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Heb. 12:11 RSV).

Four disciplines

The first discipline is to make time for prayer and Bible study. God gives strength beyond your understanding if you allow him to do so. Matt. 6:33 says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (RSV).

The second discipline is to determine how much you can eat and still maintain your weight. Consulting a doctor as to the best diet to maintain weight is important. Sometimes maintaining weight loss requires experimentation. Weighing weekly helps.

I found the best way to remember to not overeat is to make a chart and plan ahead what and how much I can eat for the day. Then after each meal I write down what I ate. Recording the infractions as well as the foods you are supposed to eat is important.

The third discipline is to enlist support of family and friends. Occasionally they want to love you with goodies or fancy meals. At times you need to accept their gifts. But you need not feel guilty or dislike yourself when you decline.

The fourth discipline is exercise. Exercising helps you to be healthy; and it builds muscles. Walking is recommended for almost everyone. If you feel lonely when walking, ask someone to join you. My husband thought he did not like to walk until I asked him to go with me. Now he enjoys walking as much as I do.

I have more time now that I am not snacking from the refrigerator. To fill that time I have a hobby. My children asked me a number of years ago to write down stories of my childhood and this has been a fun thing to do. When the gnawing pains begin, I can work on my hobby, call a friend for a chat, or write letters. I learned using food to make me feel good only made me gain weight.

The answer to life's problems cannot be found in the refrigerator. If you are hungry, lonely, tired or angry, you can go to Jesus in prayer. He is ready to hear you.

Discipline is painful for the moment, but it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Lee Hill-Nelson is a writer based in Waco, Texas.

No sustained weight loss without exercise

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Center for Science in the Public Interest) — While dealing immediately with small weight gains helps dieters remain their new selves, there's something else that's "absolutely crucial" to successful weight loss, says Yale University obesity expert Kelly Brownell: regular physical activity. Or, lest anyone misses the point: EXERCISE!

While cutting calories, and especially fat, from your diet helps cut pounds, eating less *and* exercising is better, because it helps keep lost pounds from creeping back, Brownell says.

Various studies have proven this to be true. In the late 1980s researchers from Boston University Medical Center put 110 overweight cops and other city employees on a strict diet (420 to 1000 calories a day). Half were told not to change their exercise habits, while half did 90 minutes of supervised exercise three times a week (walking, jogging, running, calisthenics; and they were taught relaxation techniques).

After eight weeks, the "dieters" had lost an average of 23 pounds; the "diet and exercisers" had lost 27 pounds — not the strongest argument for sweating away for 4 1/2 hours a week.

But 18 months after the study ended, the "dieters" had gained back more than 90 per cent of the weight they had lost. On average, the "diet and exercisers" who had continued to exercise didn't gain back *a single pound.*

Another reason exercise is so crucial: it can help you adjust to a life of needing less food.

Take Dan and Stan. They both exercise and weigh 170 pounds. Dan eats 2,500 calories a day and doesn't gain or lose weight. But if Stan eats 2,500 calories a day, he puts on extra pounds. Why?

Stan used to weigh 210 pounds. His body still wants to.

That's what researchers at Rockefeller University found when they studied 41 men and women who had lost 15 to 64 pounds by dieting. In order to keep that weight off, the dieters had to eat 220 to 300 fewer calories a day than people who had always been at the lighter weight.

Why? The dieters' metabolic rates had slowed. The only solution for them: eat fewer calories or do more exercise.

Taking (and keeping) it off

Marian Van Til

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — "The hard part's not losing weight. It's keeping it off." American nutritionist Anne M. Fletcher knows. She has studied 160 men and women who lost an average of 63 pounds ... and managed to keep the weight off for at least three years. The results of Fletcher's study are chronicled in *Thin for Life: 10 Keys to Success From People Who Have Lost Weight & Kept It Off* (Shelburne, Vermont: Chapters Publishing, 1994).

Among their keys to success: "They learned that it's far easier to deal with several pounds at a time than with 20, 40, or 50 pounds," Fletcher says. "So they immediately reversed small weight gains."

Most subjects of the study weighed themselves regularly; many did so every day. As soon as they noticed a small gain — usually no more than three to five pounds — some exercised harder or longer for a few weeks, while others skipped dessert for a while. When they lost the extra weight, they returned to their normal routine.

Eating right will take weight off

Marian Van Til

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — Any diet that cuts calories will help you lose weight, but most experts are now saying that the best diet — for both weight loss and general health — is a low-fat one. The *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* suggests eating a diet low in saturated and *trans* fat. That means cutting back on red meat, most cheeses, whole or two per cent milk, fatty chicken or turkey (avoid thighs and wings and always eat poultry without the skin), and foods with high butter content, or with palm, coconut or partially hydrogenated oils.

To replace those things, load up on fruits, beans and vegetables, not fat-free cookies and cakes. Fat-free products are often very high in carbohydrates and calories.

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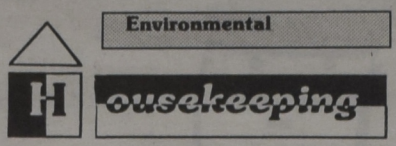
Are we emerging from an environmental fog?



John R. Wood

I have a puzzle that consists of a small circle with two vertical lines within it. What animal is it? The answer is easy if you live on the West coast. It is a pig emerging from a famous San Francisco fog. Only the tip of the nose appears, but you can easily imagine the bulk of the animal lumbering forward. I wonder today, as I look at the hazy outline of Christian environmental concern: Are we about to see the church emerge to a place of leadership in our society on this issue? If so, what will that leadership look like when it fully appears?

A few chance encounters recently have impressed on me that Christian environmental stewardship is a relatively new concern. It has not penetrated the consciousness of most people in the church. Typically, if you mention an issue, people can give you a commentary on it based on their reading of Scripture, sermons they have heard, or articles read in the Christian press.

But when I raise an environmental concern I often get a view couched exclusively in secular terms. We have a long way to go before people inside the church (not to mention outside) are conversant with Christian principles of earthkeeping. But the resources to help us are all around us; we just need to make use of them.

Earthkeepers read and remember

This summer the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) published "God's Earthkeepers: Biblical Action and Reflection on the Environment." In the U.S., World Vision and the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) had earlier put out "Let the Earth Be Glad: A Starter Kit for Evangelical Churches to Care for God's Creation." These publications will go a long way toward getting your church started toward hearing the word of God in creation. This year Green Cross appeared for the first time. The purpose of this quarterly magazine is "to help readers care for creation in a way that is faithful to Jesus Christ." Articles include practical action, inspirational and church news items.

Involvement for you and your church

The EEN has also helped launch the Christian Environmental Council (CEC), which held its second annual meeting last month. The CEC is a fellowship of Christians committed to making creation care a part of faithful discipleship. The council is for pastors, denominational leaders, authors and artists, and executives of Christian organizations, among others. In short, anyone who is concerned about caring for creation biblically and who wants to be involved actively. If your group was not represented this year, it could be next year.

But all of this activity has barely pierced the fog of our daily grind. The environment has almost disappeared off the front pages of the newspaper. The Green Plan in Canada has been eclipsed. Attention has now shifted to more pressing economic and political concerns, while the body politic has been riveted into action on the fate of the nation-state.

The environment seems like just one of many concerns that must move back in line as more weighty matters are dealt with now. I wonder if this is an adequate view of our stewards' task. We are missing a chance to address fundamental societal issues in the full light of a stewardship perspective.

The outline of Christian environmental concern that I see emerging looks to unify these seemingly disparate issues. Leaders in the church are recognizing that it is impossible to act righteously or to bring justice without addressing what are narrowly defined as environmental concerns. I see a larger view of Christian stewardship emerging today out of the environmental fog.

John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's College in Edmonton.

County in Nova Scotia does pioneer work in recycling

Alan Doerksen, with files from the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*

HALIFAX, N.S. — Recycling and composting have become a way of life for the people of Lunenburg County, N.S., where one of North America's largest recycling programs is being conducted.

At the heart of the program is the county's new $9-million waste recycling and composting plant. Residents carefully separate their trash into paper and cardboard, glass, cans and plastic, which are all recycled. Organic waste materials (vegetable and meat wastes) are stored in green compost carts. Anything left is thrown out as regular garbage.

"It costs extra to do it this way," admits David Steele, manager of the waste management plans and CEO for the municipality of Lunenburg. But some of the recycled trash can turn a profit. A year's worth of compost can earn up to $250,000.

County officials estimate that 85 per cent of residents are participating in recycling efforts. In the future, the county may fine those who don't take part, but for now waste collectors put reject stickers on the garbage of unco-operative people and refuse to pick it up.

Business opposition

Some businesses oppose the new program because of problems related to storing garbage. John Letson, who runs the Mug and Anchor Pub in Mahone Bay, disapproves of the compost carts because of the stench they can produce.

"It's the organics that are causing the problem for us," says Letson. Using the compost carts "is really impractical for a place like ours that produces a high volume of organic waste."

Last summer, the pub filled up to 10 compost carts each week, and the bins were picked up once every two weeks. To help solve the smell problem, Letson and other restaurant owners pay a local business to pick up their organic waste more often. But Letson resents paying the extra bill, especially when he has to pay high property taxes.

In Lunenburg, motel owners complain that the smell on compost collection day causes tourists to lose interest in strolling through the town's picturesque streets.

"We like to have barbecues out on our parking lot," says Don Wilson, owner of the Topmast Motel. "But if the wind is blowing in that direction, the stench from the carts is enough to make you sick."

"The system is definitely more expensive for both commercial operators and householders," comments Steele. "But the decision to go this route was an environmental one. We knew the cost would be greater." More frequent waste pick-ups for businesses would send municipal costs through the roof, he says.

Despite some complaints, Steele says the recycling program has already diverted more than 70 per cent of waste from the local landfill site. Steele is proud of the recycling program, which is something he always hoped would develop in his lifetime.

"There's a lot of interest in what we're doing here," he says. "We had a group here from the Caribbean recently."

Although the county is doing pioneer work in recycling, Nova Scotia laws that come into effect in the year 2000 will require every community to cut in half the waste being sent to landfills. Lunenburg County has already met that goal.

The only similar program run on such a wide scale in Canada is the East Prince Waste Management Commission on Prince Edward Island. It handles recyclables, compost and waste from 10,000 households, 1,000 cottages and 1,000 businesses. That program has been running smoothly since December 1994, says its executive director, Claudette Gallant.

Environmental education plan launched in B.C. schools

VICTORIA, B.C. (BCME) — B.C. Premier Mike Harcourt launched a provincial plan for environmental education to coincide with United Nations' 50th anniversary celebrations last month.

The plan, entitled "Environmental Concepts in the Classroom," guides kindergarten to Grade 12 teachers in integrating the study of the environment in all subject areas, and helps students understand the relationship between their daily lives and a sustainable environment.

"School systems are a major focus of these UN 50th anniversary celebrations," said Education Minister Art Charbonneau. "My hope is that today becomes a springboard for educational activities related to peace, environmental education, human rights and the quality of life, both in B.C. and around the world."

Harcourt launched the plan at a tree-planting ceremony attended by MLAs and community education partners at Mount Sentinel elementary-secondary school in South Slocan. Trees were donated to schools by the Ministry of Forests for events province-wide.

Environment Minister Moe Sihota said, "This plan is designed to help students understand how their actions can affect the environment. By understanding the environmental consequences of their daily lives, students can more fully participate in international efforts to preserve our planet."

Copies of "Environmental Concepts in the Classroom" are available from the B.C. Ministry of Education communications branch by calling 604-356-2500 in Victoria, or 604-660-2421 in Greater Vancouver. Elsewhere in the province, call 1-800-663-7867 and request a transfer to 356-2500.

Advice/News

Canadian evangelicals gathering on the Web

TORONTO (EFC) — The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) is working to unite its members on the Internet. The decision was made following a one-day Internet consultation for ministry leaders.

At this first-of-its-kind consultation, EFC assembled 40 Canadian ministry leaders for a day of education and dialogue to determine how the Christian community should respond to the Internet.

Internet expert Shane Goedvolk reported that 40 million people worldwide currently use the Internet, with 300,000 more going online each week.

At the end of the day, ministry leaders agreed with EFC that cyberspace is a rapidly expanding mission field that must be harvested. People who are uncomfortable exploring new ideas and places may drop their guard on the Internet, and the church can benefit by reaching out, online, to people who do not normally attend a church.

Communications consultant Steven Sheils said, "Christians at large must accept their responsibility to use the Internet and similar technologies to create a positive impact on Christians and non-Christians alike through the dissemination of information and knowledge, with the overall goal of facilitating the pursuit of Christ-centred wisdom."

Delegates were excited by the Internet and recognized the dynamic potential that "chat rooms," self-help groups, missionary correspondence, online libraries and shared resources offer to Christians.

EFC's executive director, Brian Stiller, shares the delegates' enthusiasm for the Internet and has authorized the creation of a Web site for EFC. At the request of consultation delegates, EFC is preparing a proposal seeking a cost-effective way to unite Canadian evangelicals on the Internet. The proposal should be available for evangelical leaders next month.

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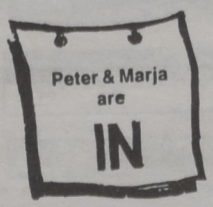

When can a homemaker retire?

Dear P & M:

As the oldest child of a large family, I have done a lot of work in my lifetime, both in the Netherlands and in Canada. Now I'm 67, my husband is retired, my children are happily married and I have nine grandchildren to spoil. The problem? I can't relax. When I sit down during the day to read, knit or crochet, I feel guilty. Even when I visit family or friends at home or in the hospital I feel guilty. There is always work to do if you look for it. A man retires when he is 65; but what about a housewife? The Bible says, "He who doesn't work shall not eat." It's not that I'm afraid of not eating. Actually, it might be good for my figure if I lost a few pounds. But I think that I'm disobeying God if I don't work all the time. After all, God tells us to labor and do our work in six days. Am I allowed to take it easy without feeling guilty?

Dear Can't Relax:

So much dust; so little time! Ah, if we could only learn to relax. But, as the old saying went, "A woman's work is never done."

Many women from your generation worked at home and found fulfillment in rearing children, cleaning house, cooking meals and so on. Your husband, however, went to his place of work for a set number of hours and received a regular paycheque. When he came home his workday was done. You, on the other hand, have had to be your own boss all your life. And no one works harder than someone who is her own boss and works out of her own home.

Now your husband is retired. He doesn't go to his job anymore. Just as he used to have a real sense of being done when he came home for supper, so he now has a real sense of being finished with his career. That sense of completion allows him to enjoy new interests and experiences without any guilt. But that's not how it is for you, and that's because you still live in your workplace with the same job description that you've had for all these years.

To change things you must first of all accept the fact that you don't have the same workload as you did in the past. Your children are grown, with families of their own. Your husband is at home able to share whatever work it takes to keep the place in shape. So *your* job description has actually changed too. You have entered a different season. The biblical perspective on this is that there is a time and season for every activity under heaven (Ecclesiastes 3). The wise person accepts, even relishes, the new seasons as they come. So savor this season of retirement!

Secondly, God wants you to realize that there's more to life than cleaning house. The writer of Ecclesiastes also says that "there is nothing better for people than to be happy and do good while they live" (3:12). Paul, in the chapter from which you have plucked the verse about working and eating, writes: "Never tire of doing what is right" (2 Thess. 3:13).

So how can a 67-year-old woman do good and do right? By doing the very things which have made you feel so guilty. The Lord wants us to develop relationships with friends and family, with the sick and the lonely. He loves to see grandparents enjoy their grandchildren. He smiles at seniors who take on hobbies and projects that bring joy to themselves and to others.

Finally, embrace the biblical view of rest. The fourth commandment about the sabbath was not given to make people work more, but to help hard-working people like you work *less.* Do you remember what Jesus said to Martha when she complained about her sister's lack of help. He said: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38-42). The better thing that Martha chose was to enjoy a closer relationship with the Lord. So she let her housework go and relaxed at Jesus' feet.

Take the time to read, to knit and crochet, to walk, to travel, to enjoy all the wonderful ways in which God reveals himself to us. At God's invitation, rest without guilt. Stop disobeying God by working all the time!

Remember, too, that the proverbs about "sluggards" are aimed at lazy people "who turn on their beds as doors turn on their hinges" (Prov. 26:14). Similarly, Paul's writings against idleness are meant for those who expect something for nothing, who won't lift a hand towards their keep. You know that you don't fit these categories.

Discuss this column with your husband. Ask for his help and reassurance in making this transition. Then enjoy your retirement, especially as you drop this burden of unnecessary guilt.

Write to: P eter and Marja Slofstra, 16 Kimbermount Dr., St. Catharines, ON, L2N 5V6

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

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(Revised February 1, 1995)

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Anniversaries	$45.00
2-column anniversaries	$90.00
Obituaries	$45.00
Notes of thanks	$35.00
Birthdays	$40.00

All other one-column classified advertisements: $15.00 per column inch. NOTE: Minimum fee is $15.00. Letter under file number $35.00 extra. Photos: $25.00 additional charge.

Note: All rates shown above are GST inclusive

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a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.,

b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

d) *Christian Courier* will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.

e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. *Christian Courier* reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of $15.00 per column inch (GST incl.).

NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS

We offer a one-year subscription for only $25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the *Christian Courier* and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose $25.00 and the couple's correct address.

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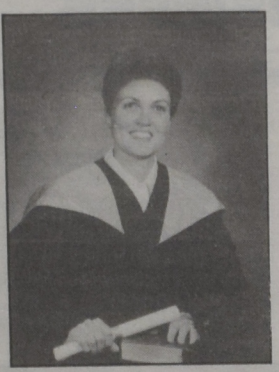
4-261 Martindale Rd.
St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1
Phone: (905) 682-8311
Fax: (905) 682-8313

Graduation

STONEHOUSE:

Congratulations Christina!



Congratulations to Christina Stonehouse on the occasion of her graduation!

Mr. and Mrs. J. Heeringa of Burlington, Ont., are pleased to announce the graduation of their daughter

CHRISTINA STONEHOUSE

from McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont., with a Post-Diploma Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree.

At present Christina is employed by Health Canada in Lausdowne House nursing station, Ont.

Personal

WHY NOT?

The **Christian Marriage Contact Service** assists men and women in the USA and Canada who would like to marry or remarry.

Why not write to us at C.M.C.S.?
Enclose $5.00 for our information package.
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More male members are encouraged to apply.

Anniversaries

Anniversaries

Mr. and Mrs. Sietse Vlietstra
50th wedding anniversary open house

The Lord willing we will celebrate our parents' 50th wedding anniversary — Mr. Sietse and Mrs. Tina Vlietstra — on November 28th, 1995.

Please join us in celebrating this event at an **open house** at Holland Christian Homes — in Harmony Hall — at 7900 McLaughlin Road South, Brampton, Ont., on Saturday, **December 2, 1995,** from **2 - 4 p.m.**

Everyone is welcome. Best wishes only.

Rink, Winnie, Albert, Jo-Anne, John and Peter

Births

JAGT (nee TIGCHELAAR):

Brian and Shella praise God for the safe arrival of their first child

TYLER HUNTER

born Sept. 4, 1995. Delighted first time grandparents are John and Mary Jagt of Oakville, Ont., and Ed and Karen Tigchelaar of Carlisle, Ont. Proud first time great-grandparents are Jack and Jean Rinsema of Minneapolis, Minn., Arend and Nan Jagt of Brampton, Ont., Jack and May Goodbrand of Burlington, Ont., and George and Betty Tigchelaar of Carlisle, Ont.

Address: 116 Mill Street North, Waterdown, ON L0R 2H0

Anniversaries

1950 November 29 1995

It is with a profound sense of awe and wonder at our heavenly Father's faithfulness and care in the lives of

WILLIAM and DIANE KLYN-HESSELINK
(nee EENINK)

that we, their children and grandchildren wish to announce their

45th ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations!

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Sarah, David, Jeremy, Tiffany, Daniel
Bill & Carol Klyn-Hesselink
Daryl, Erica, Michelle
Wilma & Albert Grin
Reuben, Jesse, Brock
Brenda & Rob Heyns
Courtney, Rachael, Emily

Open house on Saturday morning, Dec. 2, 1995, from 10-12 a.m., at Owen Sound Chr. Ref. Church, Owen Sound, Ont.

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Obituaries

April 17, 1929 - Nov. 3, 1995

After a short illness

CORNELIS VAN NETTEN

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Dear father of:
Marguerite & Bob Hudson — London
Gary Van Netten — Toronto

Beloved opa of Samantha, Rebecca and Emily.

Survived by his mother, S. van Netten-Wynja, in the Netherlands and seven brothers and sisters in the Netherlands, England and Canada.

Funeral service took place on Nov. 6, 1995, at Bethel Chr. Ref. Church, in London, Ont.

"Then I will go up to the altar of God, to God my joy and my delight." (Ps. 43:4).

Correspondence address: Mr. and Mrs. Bob Hudson, 1575 Dale St., London, ON N5V 1Y1

Personal

Born-again Christian woman, attractive with sense of humor, likes nature, music and reading, **seeks friendship with gentleman,** in early 40s.

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Christian lady in her early seventies **would like to correspond with Christian gentleman** 70-75 years old. Write to **File #2633, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1**

Professional gent, semi-retired, likes to meet **Christian girl** with positive attitude (age unimportant) for outings (as shows, concerts, etc.) and perhaps a friendly relationship or correspondence. **Southern Ontario.** Drop me a line. Picture will be returned. Write to: **File #2632, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1.**

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TRENTON, Ont.: Trenton Chr. School invites applications from qualified teachers for a **maternity leave position for grades 7/8** effective March 18, 1996. Please send letter of application, resumes, inquiries, etc., to:

Ike Witteveen, Principal
Trenton Chr. School
20 Fourth Avenue
Trenton, ON K8V 5N3
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Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Call extended:
— to Wallaceburg, Ont., Rev. Henry Vander Beek of Iron Springs, Alta.

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Classifieds

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ICS

PRINCIPAL

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Lacombe Chr. School is a school of 340 students serving Grades K-9. The school is located in the town of Lacombe, midway between Edmonton and Calgary.
The Lacombe Chr. School is looking for an educational leader who is a committed Christian and who has the experience, vision and skills necessary to lead our staff and school.
Please send resume, statement of education philosophy and other pertinent information prior to **November 24, 1995**, to:

Mr. John Piers, Principal
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Phone: (403) 782-6531; Fax: (403) 782-5760

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Houston Christian School needs an interim high school teacher (mainly English and socials) from **Nov. 20, 1995, through June 28, 1996,** who can also be a candidate for a Grade 12 position beginning in **August 1996.** The successful candidate for the 1995-96 school year should be able to teach several high school subjects, particularly the humanities — social studies, history. Houston Christian School has a brand new facility including a gym and will expand to include Grade 12 next year. All inquiries should be directed to: **Mr. Jack VandenBorn, Principal, Houston Christian School, P.O. Box 237, Houston, BC, V0J 1Z0. Phone: (604) 845-7736 (school), (604) 845-3778, (residence), Fax: (604) 845-7738.**

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Classifieds

Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous

Attention:

Business Community/ Christian Organizations Insert YOUR message in our Special 1995 Christmas issue

In past years we have supplied members of Christian Reformed churches across Canada with a free copy of the annual Christmas issue. This year we plan to do the same. Date of this issue will be **December 8.** It will be mailed to our regular subscribers on **December 5.**

In addition, we plan to distribute close to 20,000 copies of this issue to Reformed Christians across Canada free of charge.

To print so many extra copies costs money. We are appealing to the business community and to Christian organizations to help us out. Feel free to include your annual Christmas greetings in your ad, as you have done before.

Please do not wait. Take a moment to complete and return the attached coupon. Kindly include precise instructions as to the content of your ad.

Your continued support will be greatly appreciated.

Deadline for advertisements in this special issue is November 22, 1995.

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I wish to sponsor and ad for _____

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Events

Nederlandse Kerstzangdienst

Emmanuel Reformed Church
170 Clarke Street North, Woodstock, Ontario
Phone: (519) 537-6422

Nederlandse Kerstzangdienst
met medewerking van het Kerkkoor

Wij hopen, D.V., twee diensten te houden:
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zondag, 10 december 1995, 7.30 n.m.
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Events

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Stan de Jong
Manager

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

* **Nov. 17-19** Calvin College Ontario Band Tour. **Nov. 17:** 8 p.m., First CRC, **Sarnia**, Ont.; **Nov. 18:** 8 p.m., First CRC, **Hamilton**, Ont.; **Nov. 19:** 9 and 11 a.m. services, First CRC, **London**, Ont.; **Nov. 19:** 9:30 a.m., Bethel CRC, **London**, Ont.; **Nov. 19:** 10:30 a.m. Good News CRC, **London**, Ont.

Nov. 18 "Biggest Bazaar in Town," annual bazaar from 10 a.m.-6 p.m., at Calvin Memorial Chr. School, 300 Scott St., **St. Catharines**, Ont. A fun day!

* **Nov. 18** Organist Willem van Suydam in concert with the church choir, 8 p.m., CRC, **Tillsonburg**, Ont. Info.: (905) 455-0797.

Nov. 18 John Calvin CS/Woodland CHS's annual bazaar, 1:30-5 p.m., First CRC, 287 Water St., **Guelph**, Ont. Charity auction at 5 p.m. Info.: (519) 837-0298.

Nov. 21-23 CCEF's 20th Anniversary Christian Education Rallies. **Nov. 21:** 7:30 p.m., Bulkley Valley Chr. School (Elementary Campus auditorium), **Smithers**, B.C. Speaker: Rev. John D. Hellinga. **Nov. 23:** 7:30 p.m., Immanuel CS gymnasium, **Lethbridge**, Alta. Speaker: Fred R. Vander Velde, Executive Director, C.C.E.F.

* **Nov. 23** Langley Chr. School Society opens new campus and celebrates 40 years of Christian education, 7 p.m., 22702-48th Ave., **Langley**, B.C. Info.: (604) 533-0839.

Nov. 25 The King's University College Choir and Instrumentalists in concert, 8 p.m., West End CRC, **Edmonton**. Info.: (403) 465-3500.

* **Nov. 25** "The Debt: A Fresh Approach," a one-day seminar led by David Peter-Woods, using theories of Christian economist Bob Goudzwaard, among others. For info. call (416) 979-2331.

Nov. 25 Shalom Manor's "Annual Tea & Craft Sale," 1 - 4 p.m., at Shalom Manor, **Grimsby**, Ont. Flowers, crafts, gifts and the ever–popular bake table. Everyone welcome!

* **Nov. 25** Organist Willem van Suydam in concert with the "Rejoice in the Lord" choir, 8 p.m., Westmount CRC, **Strathroy**, Ont. Info.: (905) 455-0797.

* **Dec. 1** Organist Willem van Suydam in concert with the "New Life Choir," 8 p.m. , Cathedral of St. Catherine, Church St., **St. Catharines**, Ont. Info.: (905) 455-0797.

Dec. 1-5 Crossfire Assembly hosts the "Passion & Fire" prophetic conference with Jill Austin at Tivoli Theatre, 108 James St. N., **Hamilton**, Ont. Info.: (905) 525-8894.

* **Dec. 2** Organist Willem van Suydam in concert with Woodstock and Brantford choirs, 8 p.m., Grace Anglican Church, **Brantford**, Ont. Info.: (905) 455-0797.

Dec. 2 17th Annual Arts & Crafts Sale, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., at TKUC, **Edmonton.**

* **Dec. 3** Frisian worship service, led by Rev. John D. Hellinga, 3 p.m., Ebenezer CRC, **Jarvis**, Ont. For info.: (519) 587-5069.

* **Dec. 3 and 10** "Nederlandse Kerstzangdienst," at 7:30 p.m., Emmanuel Ref. Church, 170 Clarke St. N., **Woodstock**, Ont. Info.: (519) 537-6422.

Dec. 8 Christmas concert by the "Hosanna Choir," directed by Herman Den Hollander, accompanied by John Vanderlaan and Mary De Vries, 8 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont. Freewill offering. Info.: (905) 648-6585.

* **Dec. 8** Organist Willem van Suydam in concert with "The Fergus/Elora Singers," 8 p.m., Can. Ref. Church, **Fergus**, Ont. Info.: (905) 455-0797.

* **Dec. 9** Organist Willem van Suydam in concert with "The Fort William Male Choir," 8 p.m., St. Paul's United Church, **Thunder Bay**, Ont. Info.: (905) 455-0797.

Dec. 10 The Mississauga Choral Society presents Handel's "Messiah," 3 p.m., St. Dominic's Church (Atwater & Cawthra), **Mississauga**, Ont. Info.: (905) 278-7059.

Dec. 17 Dutch worship service, led by Rev. Henry R. De Bolster, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

Miscellaneous | Miscellaneous

Passion & Fire Prophetic Conference

with Jill Austin

December 1-5, 1995

at
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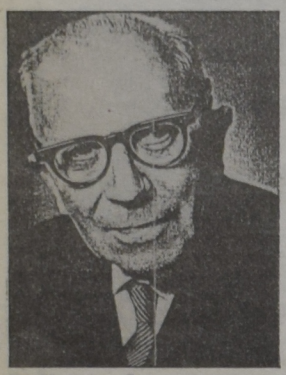
German theologian who opposed Nazi regime remembered at Lutheran conference



C.C. FILES

Dr. Hermann Sasse

Alan Doerksen

Dr. Hermann Sasse, the late German theologian who actively opposed the Third Reich and who made strong contributions to Lutheran thought on liturgy in the post-war world, was honored at an international symposium held in St. Catharines, Ont. in late October.

The symposium marked the centennial of Sasse's birth (he died in 1976) and was presented by the St. Catharines-based Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary. Guest speakers came from the U.S., Germany, Sweden and Australia to speak about Sasse and his impact on the church.

Opposed fanatical ideology

Dr. John Wilch, a professor at Concordia, spoke on Sasse's work in Germany during the Second World War. "Sasse was the first German theologian to raise his voice against Nazism," said Wilch. Sasse saw the Nazi ideology as "the largest spiritual power to arise since the Reformation" and saw Nazi followers as fanatical and capable of violence. To Sasse, the Nazi doctrine was "a permanent insult to the German race."

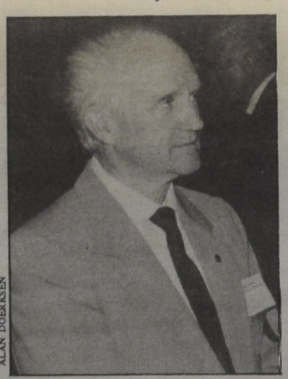
At that time, some German pastors were convinced that Nazism was Christian, and some even saw Hitler as a messenger from God, said Wilch. "Even confessional Lutheran professors sympathized with the Nazi movement.... They did not know that Hitler was a criminal."

No compromise

"Sasse opposed attempts by the Nazis to control the church," said Wilch. But at that time many church leaders were reluctant to confront the Nazi government directly. Some even wanted to evangelize the Nazi party from within. But Sasse followed the biblical doctrine that "one must obey God rather than man," commented Wilch.

During the war years the Nazi government gained more control over the church, and at one point Hitler told German church leaders: "Christianity will vanish from Germany as easily as from Russia."

Sasse also opposed the wartime union of Protestant churches in Germany because it would nullify the confessions of the Lutheran Church. In Sasse's opinion, "The German Protestant church is no church, but an artificial coalition."



ALAN DOERKSEN

Dr. John Wilch

Too little, too late

In 1933, Sasse worked together with Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others to draw up the Bethel confession, which would reflect the common beliefs of Germany's Lutheran churches and their opposition to Nazism. But the final result was so watered-down that Bonhoeffer "angrily rejected the document out of hand" and Sasse refused to sign it because it made little mention of the Lutheran Church.

C.C. FILES

Dr. John Kleinig

Sasse's views on the confession were: "The Lutheran Church cannot survive when her confessions are set aside.... The great hour of the confessional church has been missed."

"The overall effect of the revision process was a disaster," said Wilch. "The Bethel confession soon became forgotten — too little, too late."

During the Nazi regime, Sasse stood superficially loyal to the Third Reich but he was, in fact, criticizing it, said Wilch. Because of this "he was continually harassed by the Nazis."

Although Bonhoeffer was jailed and later executed by the Nazis, Sasse was not imprisoned because his opposition was less active than Bonhoeffer's. Bonhoeffer was involved with an attempt to assassinate Hitler, but Sasse expressed his opposition to the Hitler government in his sermons and lectures and was overlooked by the Nazis, said Wilch.

"Sasse always observed political events in the whole world and criticized them," said Wilch.

Sacraments important

Dr. John Kleinig, a lecturer from Luther Campus in North Adelaide, Australia, spoke about Sasse's commitment to baptism and the use of the Lord's Supper and Scripture in worship. Kleinig is a former student of Sasse's and also shared some humorous stories about taking classes from Sasse in Australia.

Kleinig called Sasse a liturgical theologian who wrote papers dealing with the Lord's Supper, the church at prayer, (which Kleinig calls "a sheer gem") and liturgy and confession.

Sasse "won me over to his vision of heavenly worship," said Kleinig.

Physical presence

Sasse stressed the importance of the Lord's Supper. For Sasse, weekly services without communion would be "unthinkable," said Kleinig. Sasse believed that "the glorified Christ was physically present" in the sacrament, and celebrating the Lord's Supper was "a matter of life and death for the church."

Without communion, "preaching degenerates into religious discourse. People hear about redemption without participating in redemption."

Likewise, communion must always be accompanied by preaching just as the preaching of Jesus was always accompanied by the performance of signs and wonders, said Kleinig.

Baptism was also essential to Sasse. Without it, Christianity was only a philosophy. To Sasse, "the pastor led people to the font and from the font to the altar" (i.e., there is a natural progression in the Christian life from baptism to communion).

Sasse also believed that prayer was essential for the church. "The church prays. That is it's main calling.... By praying, the church made its unique contribution to the world," said Kleinig, paraphrasing Sasse.

Intercessory function

In his paper *The Church at Prayer,* Sasse wrote that the whole church should be involved in prayer. "By its intercessory prayer the church brought the whole human race... before God. When prayer is made in the name of Jesus, the whole church joins the risen Lord in his prayer."

In his ideas on liturgy, Sasse was a conservative, said Kleinig. "He maintained that the oldest liturgies were the best ones." One reason for this was that the older liturgies were inclusive and not idiosyncratic.

In Sasse's view, "the liturgy is an anticipation of the eternal worship that goes on in heaven," said Kleinig.

About 250 people, mainly from Canada and the U.S., attended the Sasse symposium. It was the 20th in an annual series of lectures sponsored by Concordia Seminary and Lutheran Life Insurance Society of Canada.

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